



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT NORFOLK SPRING MIGRATION 20TH – 23RD MAY 2021

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21st May

Gary collected the assembled group from their base at The Blue Boar, Great Ryburgh before heading off towards the coast. The forecast was appalling for the day, with high winds and driving rain, we hoped they were wrong, it's happened before, but they unfortunately weren't! That said we made the most of it, saw a nice selection of birds, and for the majority of time managed to keep dry. Our first stop was a small private Nature Reserve Near Flitcham. Close views of Marsh Harriers and Grey Partridge plus Red Kite, Tufted Duck, Oystercatcher among the birds to start our trip off. Next stop was Snettisham Coastal Path and Ken Hill Marshes, where we walked out along the sea wall gaining a view over both sites. This meant unfortunately we were exposed from a wind perspective so we dropped lower down the bank on the Ken Hill side for shelter. Several singing warblers were carrying on regardless, and a perched Whitethroat and a more secretive Lesser Whitethroat, were amongst those noted. On the marsh there were numerous nesting Black-headed Gulls and scanning across the area we picked up Avocet, Shelduck, Grey Heron and Little Egret. The rain was getting heavier so we headed back to the van and onto The RSPB Reserve, heading to the shelter of the hides along the edge of the wash over looking the lagoons. The lagoons were disappointingly quiet seemingly again the summer home for hundreds of nesting Black-headed Gulls though several pairs of Common Terns were found amongst them. The sea ward side of the hides proved more productive, with a nice selection of commoner wader species noted, mainly Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Dunlin and Grey Plover, some of the latter in full breeding plumage, a real "wow" moment! A brief "facilities" stop in Hunstanton was followed by a small detour to the Cliffs there and the addition of Fulmar to our list.

Lunch was next at Holme, before a visit to the NOA hide that overlooks the Broadwater. Conditions in the hide weren't ideal with the rain driving in through the flaps, though with some juggling of our positions we all managed views of the birds on show. These included a few remaining winter visitors, a handful of Brent Geese, Wigeon and an injured Pink-footed Goose the latter clearly here for the summer (should it ever arrive!).

Next we headed to an area at the rear of the marsh at Holme and a welcome break in the weather enabled us to go for a short walk. Highlights here were a calling Cuckoo that was glimpsed several times, a booming Bittern and two Spoonbills. With time now to degree against us, we decided a short walk nearby along the dune edge would be a good use of time. We arrived in the dry but unfortunately the rain soon reappeared, which had largely sent the birds back into cover. We returned to the van and ironically the rain had started easing so we walked a little further on noting a perched Whitethroat followed by a reeling Grasshopper Warbler. The Grasshopper Warblers exact position proved difficult to judge and the returning rain soon meant it went silent and at this point we decided the call it a day and head back to base.

22nd May

Gary collected the group as the previous day, the difference being the weather was already more favourable, the wind had dropped considerably and the rain had stopped, fingers crossed it would stay like that!

Our destination today was the Breckland area of the county, with a short 'hop' across the border into Suffolk too.

Our first stop was very much a speculative one, which didn't produce the hoped for species but the first of the day's Cuckoos and a perched, and to a degree approachable Hobby, got us off to a good start. Our route south took us by some pig fields where some poor, though acceptable views, of Tree Sparrows on the telegraph wires were gained by some of the group. Next stop was a field edge and after a few minutes peering into the weedy growth in the centre of the field a Stone Curlew was spotted, followed by a second and then finally a recently fledged youngster.

We then moved onto to do some woodland birding, stopping close to a recently cleared conifer plantation. As we disembarked from the bus a Goldcrest was heard singing above us, followed by a Firecrest! Unfortunately this proved harder to locate than hoped and we ended up leaving it and trying again on the way back. The rest of the walk was more productive with a male Stonechat, Mistle Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker and a hoped for Tree Pipit, amongst the birds seen. A second try for the Firecrest on the return leg fortunately proved successful, with good views finally enjoyed by us all.

A short drive took us to another part of the forest, where our hoped for target bird was Woodlark, which it turned out couldn't be easier, with a singing bird appearing above us as we disembarked from the van! A Treecreeper sang several times nearby, which unfortunately remained hidden and then fell silent. We walked to the area where the Woodlark had flown too, seeing again singing high above us, with it another flying low over us a little while later. A Tree Pipit could also be heard, as could a Garden Warbler, the latter proving challenging to view, largely hidden in the top of the leaf canopy of a nearby Birch tree.

The next stop saw us heading further south and into Suffolk for lunch at a small area of scrubland habitat, a stronghold for Nightingales. Eating lunch took priority though, but once everyone was refueled we set off in search of our quarry.

A showy 'canary yellow' Yellowhammer sang in full view for us at the top of a nearby Hawthorn Bush and both Garden Warbler and Willow warblers could be heard singing in various spots around us. A Willow Warbler was located as expected, singing from the top of tall Hawthorn and seen well in the telescope.

Snatches of Nightingale song were also audible so we walked around the scrub, which encouragingly has restricted access during the breeding season, towards the area it could be heard. This was right of the edge of the area and meant walking along a narrow tarmacked road and as we walked down both Whitethroat and Blackcap showed well for us.

Nightingales unfortunately aren't normally that co-operative in the showy department, especially this late in the season and day. Today was no exception, but that said most of us managed to hear snatches of their song and glimpses of birds as they flew across the road. Pleased with our success we headed back towards Norfolk and the RSPB reserve at Lakenheath Fen. With time restricting us to degree we decided to do a shorter circular route at the site involving a look at the Wetland, a walk along the river and then along the edge of the first of the big reed beds. A good selection of birds followed including a showy female Stonechat along the river edge, a mixed hirundine and swift flock hawking over the water including several Sand Martins and eventually the hoped for pair of Garganey. A calling Cuckoo again appeared, we were doing rather well for this species, a distant Barn Owl and

two impressive hawking Hobbies over the nearby marsh completed the river part of the walk. The reed bed area gave us some nice views of Reed Warbler but some 'pinging' Bearded Tits unfortunately did no more than tantalize us.

Our last destination today was a short walk along a section of the Little Ouse, which was resulted in our first real encounter with rain today but on the plus side we gained nice views of a pair of Mandarin and a black-throated male Grey Wagtail.

23rd May

The last day of our trip and the destination to today was the Coast again, Burnham Overy Dunes our first stop. We parked on the coast road, walking along a track down onto the marsh to join the seawall and finally into the dunes to view the sea. The track edge scrub held the expected Warblers, with Sedge, Reed, Whitethroat and the expected vocal and elusive Cetti's heard. Avocets, Lapwings and Redshanks and a few Curlews were noted on the flooded areas either side of us.

As we walked onto the seawall we gained a good view of the reed beds and the surrounding area. Several distant Marsh Harriers and Buzzards were noted and a single Pink-footed Goose was noted in amongst the numerous Greylags. A 'whinnying' Little Grebe could be heard on the large pool in the centre of the reed bed, eventually showing, though in typical constantly diving fashion!

The first of the days Great White Egrets appeared flying over the reed bed, landing in full view in the top of a large bush, a breeding plumage bird with a black bill and as we walked on several Spoonbills flew past and over us. The habitat changed as we approached the dune area and so did the birds with the expected Stonechats and Meadow Pipits noted. We stood for a while viewing the distant sea from the dunes, managing to eventually add acceptable views of the commoner tern species with a distant Little Tern landing on the sand and allowing scope views. A flyover calling Yellow wagtail was a bonus, albeit brief! We returned back to the van driving into nearby Wells-next-the-sea, where we said our goodbyes to Lynnette and made use of the local facilities. Lunch at nearby Holkham, Lady Anne's Drive, was followed by a walk out to view the marshes on the southern edge of the pines. A singing Willow Warbler allowed scope views but the walk out to our final destination was comparatively quiet with little of note seen. Arriving at the Joe Jordan Hide we scanned the area in front of us finding our target relatively easily, a Common Crane. We enjoyed nice scope views of it, with the bird also so doing a brief dancing display and six Spoonbills on the adjacent pool were a nice bonus too. We returned back to the van, heading next to our final destination of the day to view the recently created pools on the eastern edge of Wells town.

We spent the last hour of the trip scanning the pools, largely trying to pin point and gain views of the scuttling Little Ringed Plovers there. Three were seen, with the nice reasonably close views eventually achieved. A selection of gulls were also on view, Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Black-headed with importantly two 2CY Common Gulls in amongst them, never the most exciting birds as far as groups are concerned, but a new one for the trip and to a degree intuitive. These signalled the end of the trip and we headed back to the Blue Boar where we said our goodbyes and started our journeys home.

Species

Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>
Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>
Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedecnemus</i>
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa (leader only)</i>
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>

Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti (heard only)</i>
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia (heard only)</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca (heard only)</i>
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus (heard only)</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea (heard only)</i>
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris (heard only)</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>

Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>

Others

Muntjac
Chinese Water Deer

Wall Brown
Green-veined White
Holly Blue